

January 12, 2009

Dear Advisory Committee for the 2010 Dietary Guidelines,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on past editions of the Dietary Guidelines and to suggest changes for the revision of the 2005 Dietary Guidelines.

As educators, policymakers and public health professionals work with Americans faced with obesity, overweight and chronic diseases, the Dietary Guidelines that shape this work must be composed with basic accurate information. As I searched the 2005 Dietary Guidelines, I found the most basic health recommendation overlooked---that of drinking water. However, this is not a surprise because today many Americans overlook the importance of drinking water. Though you have previously wrestled with this suggestion and publicly defended your position, I urge you to reconsider the tenets of your position and make water consumption a key recommendation in the 2010 Dietary Guidelines.ⁱ

Water consumption is critical to keep bodies protected, functioning, hydrated and healthy.ⁱⁱ To choose water as a beverage to quench thirst or increase hydration is no longer a common sense choice made by Americans. It is clear that water is overlooked when some of the most recent studies on beverage consumption trends in the United States did not report water in the beverage list.^{iii, iv} Research shows that consumption of sweetened beverages in larger quantities continues to rise. These sugary drinks are estimated to be the source of 21% of one's energy intake, the equivalent of an extra 222 calories per person per day from beverages alone.^{v, vi} The water option is increasingly crowded out in a sea of unhealthy beverage choices contributing to the over-consumption of calories. Pure, unprocessed water is no longer a simple choice but rather a choice that takes discernment. To help Americans meet recommendations for calorie intake, weight management and physical activity, the recommendation for water consumption should be ever present.

Statistics show that 66.3% of the adult American population are overweight or obese and 32% of those adults are obese.^{vii} National statistics reveal that roughly 17% of children, ages 2-17, are also plagued by overweight. High-sugar beverages feed this epidemic. Though research does not blame sugar-sweetened beverages exclusively, they are inextricably linked with this epidemic. A most recent study shows that children are receiving between 10% and 15% of their total calories from sweetened beverages and fruit drinks, and consumptions of these beverages is still on the rise. Increases are noted particularly after many of these drinks are limited in the school environment and replaced with water.^{viii} It is of great necessity, then, to urge parents and caretakers to model drinking water and to serve it to their children.

The 2005 Dietary Guidelines encourage fluid consumption in the physical activity section. Water is named as a fluid useful for rehydration. A strong recommendation for

water should be asserted in this section. Processed water products, such as fit water and Vitamin Water, as well as energy drinks directly compete with fresh drinking water as a rehydration choice. While a single serving of one of these beverages may be low in calories, a single 8 oz. serving is not usually adequate for rehydration nor is the beverage sold in single serving sizes. These products contribute to the over-consumption of calories people are trying to burn through exercise.

The recommendation for water consumption should also accompany the recommendation for choosing fiber-rich foods.^{ix} Current nutrition information urges consumers to increase their fiber intake. To heed this instruction without also increasing water consumption results in unhealthy and painful consequences. To help consumers reap the benefits of increasing dietary fiber and maintain this dietary habit long-term, recommend that they also increase their intake of water. The 2005 Dietary Guidelines fail to link increased water consumption with increased fiber consumption.

A recommendation to increase water consumption, preferably tap water, generates awareness of an area of growing environmental concern: the threat of a global water crisis. Water shortages and water contamination put a stress on our ecosystem and food system while also contributing to compromised public health.^x Healthy people and healthy diets are intimately linked with water. Caring for the public health through food and nutrition demands that our attention turn toward water. As the beverage market continues to flood fresh water with sweeteners so do they limit and taint the fresh water option that is available for drinking. Establishing this connection between water, health and the environment will serve policymakers and the public.

The common sense response is to highlight water as a beverage choice and make it a key recommendation in the 2010 Dietary Guidelines.

Sincerely,

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ⁱ Weaver C, Lupton J, King J, et al. Dietary Guidelines vs. beverage guidance system. Am J Clin Nutr. 2006;84:1245-1246. Accessed Sept. 15, 2008.

ⁱⁱ Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Water: Meeting Your Daily Fluid Needs. Available at: http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/nutrition/nutrition_for_everyone/basics/water.htm. Accessed on Sept. 15, 2008.

ⁱⁱⁱ Storey ML, Forshee RA, Anderson PA. Beverage consumption in the US population. J Am Diet Assoc. 2006 Dec;106(12):1992-2000. Accessed Sept. 25, 2008.

^{iv} Duffey KJ, Popkin BM. Shift in patterns and consumption of beverages between 1965 and 2002. Obesity 2007;15:2739-47. Accessed Sept. 25, 2008.

^v Duffey KJ, Popkin BM. Shift in patterns and consumption of beverages between 1965 and 2002. Obesity 2007;15:2739-47. Accessed Sept. 25, 2008.

^{vi} Popkin BM, Armstrong LE, Bray GM, Caballero B, Frei B, Willett WC. A new proposed guidance system for beverage consumption in the United States. *Am J Clin Nutr* 2006;83(3):529 – 42. Accessed Sept. 25, 2008

^{vii} Overweight. National Center for Health Statistics. Available at <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/overwt.htm>. Accessed on Sept. 27, 2008.

^{viii} Wang YC, Bleich SN, Gortmaker SL. Increasing caloric contribution from sugar-sweetened beverages and 100% fruit juices among US children and adolescents, 1988-2004. *Pediatrics*. 2008 Jun;121(6):e1604-14. Accessed Sept. 27, 2008.

^{ix} Kliener SM. Water: An essential but overlooked nutrient. *J Am Diet Assoc*. 1999;99:20-206. Accessed Sept. 25, 2008.

^x BBC News. Dawn of a thirsty century. Available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/755497.stm> Accessed Sept. 25, 2008.